

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CA, US
SUBJECT: LEVESQUE REACTS TO TRUDEAU WASHINGTON SPEECH.

1. PREMIER LEVESQUE TOLD FEBRUARY 23 PRESS CONFERENCE THAT HE WAS OPEN TO ANY CONSTITUTIONAL DIALOGUE WITH TRUDEAU BUT THAT SPEECHES LIKE TUESDAY'S OR TRUDEAU'S JANUARY 28 QUEBEC CITY SPEECH WERE NOT BASIS FOR DIALOGUE. ACCUSING TRUDEAU OF SPEAKING IN GENERALITIES, LEVESQUE INVITED PRIME MINISTER TO BE MORE CONCRETE WHEN SPEAKING OF CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION. LEVESQUE DECLARED THAT IT WAS TRUDEAU'S TURN TO PUT FORWARD A COUNTEROFFER CONTAINING NEW PROPOSITIONS AS THE POSITION OF GOQ IS WELL-KNOWN, I.E., INDEPENDENCE IS ITS NUMBER ONE PRIORITY ON CONSTITUTIONAL LEVEL AND THAT PROCESS LEADING TO REFERENDUM ON SEPARATION HAS ALREADY BEEN SET IN MOTION.

2. LEVESQUE CALLED PM'S SPEECH TO CONGRESS A DISTORTION OF FACT, "RAVING" IN ONE SECTION AND "DESPERATE" IN ANOTHER. HE CATEGORIZED TRUDEAU'S VIEW OF SEPARATION AS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY AS SENSELESS RAVING. PREMIER ASKED RHETORICALLY: "HOW CAN HE CALL DISMANTLING AN OUTMODED 18TH CENTURY FEDERALIST SYSTEM A CRIME WHEN THE EMERGENCE OF INDEPENDENT STATES HAS
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BEEN ONE OF THE MOST COMMON OCCURANCES OF 20TH CENTURY?" ALL THE MORE SO, LEVESQUE ADDED, WHEN PQ PROPOSES TO DO IT DEMOCRATICALLY. LEVESQUE ALSO CHIDED TRUDEAU FOR DISTORTING TRUTH BY STATING THAT ONLY A "SMALL MINORITY" IN QUEBEC FAVORS INDEPENDENCE. LEVESQUE SAID THAT THERE IS MORE THAN A SMALL MINORITY AND IT IS GROWING. LEVESQUE CONCLUDED THAT TRUDEAU'S APPEAL TO ENGLISH CANADA FOR ACCEPTANCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES TO KEEP

COUNTRY TOGETHER WAS DESPERATE ACT AND ADMISSION BY PM THAT
FEDERALIST SYSTEM, AS WE KNOW IT, HAD FAILED. LEVESQUE HAD NO QUARREL
WITH MORE INTERNATIONAL SECTIONS OF TRUDEAU'S SPEECH WHICH
HE CHARACTERIZED AS "GOOD IN A WAY, GLOBALLY COSMIC IN ITS
APPROACH BUT ALSO COMSMETIC .

3. COMMENT: LEVESQUE'S CALL FOR TRUDEAU TO PUT
FORTH COUNTEROFFERS TO OBVIOUS GOQ POSITION REFLECTS GROWING
SENTIMENT HERE THAT BALL IS IN TRUDEAU'S COURT. THE GAZETTE
IN FEBRUARY 24 EDITORIAL JOINED CLAUDE RYAN OF LE DEVIOR, LE
SOLEIL, AND OTHERS IN SUGGESTING THAT LEON DION'S IDEA OF A
FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONAL WORKING GROUP (SEE QUEBEC 0059)
BE IMPLEMENTED. SEVERAL THOUGHTFUL OBSERVERS HERE ARE THINK-
ING IN TERMS OF SOME SORT OF CONSTITUTENT ASSEMBLY WHICH WOULD
BEGIN CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING PROCESS FROM ZERO. TRUDEAU, ON
OTHER HAND, STILL LEAVES QUEBECOIS LISTENERS WITH IMPRESSION
THAT CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM HE VAGUELY REFERS TO IN SPEECHES
WOULD JUST BE MINOR TINKERING WITH BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT. HENCE,
IT IS CLEARLY INCUMBENT ON HIM TO
CLARIFY HIS PROPOSED CHANGES-IF INDEED HE REALLY HAS ANY-OR
RISK SEEING PROCESS PASS HIM BY. QUEBEC LIBERAL LEADER GERALD D.
LEVESQUE COMMENT TO ME THAT HE BELIEVES TIME IS NOW RIGHT
FOR FEDERAL COUNTERPROPOSAL BUT HAS NO IDEA WHETHER
TRUDEAU IS PLANNING MAKE ONE.
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